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Babel and the dragon's tongue: S4C and its bilingual and multilingual films

Kate Woodward, Aberystwyth University

Established as the fourth channel in Wales, S4C was launched one day before its sister channel after a fraught and bitter battle, including many years of protests, the jailing of hundreds, the threat of a hunger strike by an MP and a famous U-turn by the lady who claimed was 'not for turning'. But despite its establishment being fundamentally tied to the preservation and development of the Welsh language, the films of S4C have consistently been international in their outlook and multilingual in their use of language.

Following the early unexpected success of two films made by non-Welsh speaking directors, namely *Rhosyn a Rhith* (Stephen Bayly, 1985) and *Milwr Bychan* (Karl Francis 1986) – both of which received critical acclaim, won numerous awards and made history by being the first Welsh language films to be shown in London's West End – S4C adopted a film policy which led to a prolific number films being produced. This film policy included filming different versions of the same film 'back to back' in different languages, and many bi- or multilingual co-productions, such as *Llid y Ddaear* (Karl Francis, 1989, with Channel Four), *Elenya* (Steve Gough, 1991, with Frankfurter Film Produktion for ZDF and the BFI) and *Cwm Hyfryd* (Paul Turner, 1993, with French channel Arte). This paper will argue that these films were a way of not only reflecting the changing face of Wales on its journey to increasing devolution from Westminster, but also a means of internationalising the Welsh experience.

Post devolution, I will argue that Marc Evans' recent multilingual *Patagonia* (2010) continues in this tradition, by engaging in a peripheral form of transnationalism that befits a young nation which is keen to project a presence beyond its borders.